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PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN  
RUEHLZ RUEHNEH RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHRS RUEHSL RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHAH #1145/01 2521238  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 091238Z SEP 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3432  
INFO RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5644  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3362  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3226  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3887  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1132  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3877  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001145

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN; EEB  
COMMERCE FOR EHOUSE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EINT](#) [EINV](#) [ECON](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN'S PRESIDENT WANTS NATIONAL  
SATELLITE

11. (U) Sensitive But Unclassified. Not for Public  
Internet.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Turkmen President Gurbanguly  
Berdimuhamedov announced plans to launch the country's  
first national satellite. The satellite would support  
telephone and Internet communications, hydrocarbon  
industries, and Turkmen TV channels. The satellite  
might also service the automated system of road  
traffic control. The government announced that the  
new satellite would greatly improve Internet access  
throughout the country, while providing valuable data  
to help solve environmental issues in the Aral and  
Caspian seas. There seems to be consensus among our  
contacts in Ashgabat that a national satellite would  
lead not only to greater communications, but also to  
greater government monitoring of the population. END  
SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) On September 5, Berdimuhamedov instructed  
Deputy Chairman for Transport and Communications  
Nazarguly Shagulyev to prepare a request for proposals  
for Turkmenistan's first national communications  
satellite. The Turkmen leader stated "When  
Turkmenistan has its own satellite, it will provide a  
powerful impetus for speeding up the development of  
the communications system, and the Internet and  
television channels in the country; it will speed up  
the implementation of environmental programs and  
broaden opportunities for using state-of-the-art  
methods for hydrocarbon and mineral exploration, as  
well as the successful implementation of many other  
national programs."

14. (SBU) To date, Turkmenistan has depended on Russian  
satellites for its communication needs. Five Turkmen  
government-controlled TV channels are broadcast via  
the Russian satellite "Yamal," which is reportedly

owned by Gazprom media holdings. Given strained Turkmen-Russian relations over gas, the argument for a Turkmen satellite, in lieu of renting from the Russians, has only strengthened since April when Russia stopped buying Turkmen gas.

15. (SBU) Greater government control of its hydrocarbon resources is rumored to be one of the chief motivators for a Turkmen national satellite. Major oil deposits in Turkmenistan lie in the western part of the country; whereas, the largest natural gas fields are in the southeast, making it difficult for the government to monitor production sites without a satellite. With increased foreign investment in the sector, it is reported that the Turkmen Oil & Gas Ministry has been ordered to use satellite monitoring systems on its foreign partners. It is rumored that employees of some foreign energy companies have been recently caught stealing oil and gas products, which elevated the need for more high-tech monitoring. Embassy sources also told us that the government plans to use the satellite to monitor gas stations across the country, since gasoline in Turkmenistan is subsidized by the government and very cheap. As a result, some of the cheap gasoline is reportedly smuggled to neighboring Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

16. (SBU) Experts believe that a Turkmen satellite will not automatically mean improved Internet and mobile service capability for private service providers, but overall Internet access would increase, meshing with

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recent government promises to make the Internet available to all Turkmen citizens. Other sources opined that the Turkmen government would continue to follow the Chinese model of strictly regulating the Internet.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: In sharp contrast to the previous president, who launched his spiritual epic and guidance book known as the "Ruhnama" into space via a specially designed container placed in a satellite, the current Turkmen president seems to at least acknowledge the need to improve Turkmen communications capabilities. But even if the new satellite does provide greater connection to the outside world, it could also be used to increase government monitoring and control. END COMMENT.

CURRAN